

He's out on his assets

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WASHINGTON—Deposed Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos and his wife, Imelda, are "furiously trying to liquidate their assets" in New York and other places to prevent them from being seized by the new Philippine government or frozen by the American government, officials charged yesterday.

State Sen. Franz Leichter (D-Manhattan) and aides to Rep. Stephen Solarz (D-Brooklyn) said they were studying ways to halt the transactions until the new government of Corazon Aquino determines whether it wants to try to claim the Marcos property because of the belief that it was purchased with stolen Philippine resources.

The CIA reportedly has estimated that Marcos looted his country of at least \$3 billion and there is a widespread belief that the Marcoses have interests in several multimillion-dollar properties in Manhattan and on Long Island.

In a telephone interview, Leichter noted that two New York brothers, Joseph and Ralph Bernstein, real estate developers who are reportedly tied to the Marcos family, announced they had exercised an option to pay \$250 million for three Manhattan buildings that congressional investigators believe are partly owned by the Marcoses.

Prime properties

The buildings are the Crown Building at 730 Fifth Ave., a high-rise at 40 Wall St., and the Herald Center retail mall at One Herald Square.

Their owners are listed as a complicated series of offshore corporations that do not list the Marcoses as partners or owners. But Solarz' House Asian Affairs Subcommittee has heard extensive testimony from those who claim the Marcoses are ultimately linked to the properties.

NBC News reported last week that the Marcoses also were trying to sell high-priced art work and antiques.

"The key for Marcos is to complete the paper work and get the property into the hands of others so that it is harder to link it to the Marcoses and therefore harder to seize or freeze," said one congressional aide.

Leichter said he was pressing Philippine friends to get the Aquino government to seek a court injunction against the exercise of the option and the sale of other purported Marcos assets. He added he might try to get an injunction himself if it appeared there was no other way to stop the sale.

Through a spokesman, Joseph Bernstein denied there was any link between the brothers' purchase of the three Manhattan buildings and an attempt by the Marcoses to cash in their holdings. "There is absolutely no merit to that charge," Bernstein insisted. "It's ridiculous. We're acting on our own in this matter."

The House of Representatives is expected to vote tomorrow to cite the Bernstein brothers for contempt of Congress because of their refusal to talk to Solarz' panel and to describe their relationship with the Marcos family.